



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**Tertiary Learning Readiness among Pre-University Students in
some Institutions in Sabah and Sarawak**

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Tertiary Learning Readiness among Pre-University Students in some
Institutions in Sabah and Sarawak

Yet Yong Seng

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Date submitted

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated tertiary learning readiness among pre-university students enrolled in sixth form, matriculation and public university foundation study pathways of some institutions in Sabah and Sarawak. This study measured students' readiness for tertiary learning from a psychosocial perspective. In addition, this study also investigated differences in readiness for tertiary education based on gender, ethnicity, study pathway and English Language use at home. A comparative cross-sectional survey research design was used in this study. An instrument, PRITES (Psychosocial Readiness for Tertiary Education Scales) was used to collect data on students' psychosocial readiness for tertiary learning. PRITES measured five dimensions of psychosocial readiness, namely, Academic Self-Efficacy, Self-Regulated Learning, Effort and Mindset, Motivation and Goal Orientation and Persistence and Determination. The sample of the study was 481 students in Sabah and Sarawak. Findings of the study showed that the students had a moderate level of psychosocial readiness for tertiary education. Specifically, they were moderately ready in terms of Effort and Mindset, Motivation and Goal Orientation and Persistence and Determination. Female students, students at foundation study pathway and Malay students were readier in terms of their psychosocial readiness for tertiary learning. Hence, based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that the relevant authorities consider designing appropriate intervention strategies to elevate students tertiary learning experience specifically targeted at male students, sixth formers and Malay students. Further studies involving longitudinal and experimental study design and a wider range of students with equivalent qualifications (such as polytechnic and community colleges diploma study pathways) should also be carried out to validate the results from this study.

Keywords: Tertiary learning readiness, psychosocial dimensions, Pre-university.

***Kesediaan Pendidikan Tinggi dalam kalangan Pelajar-pelajar Pra-universiti
di Sabah dan Sarawak***

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyiasat kesediaan pendidikan tinggi dalam kalangan pelajar-pelajar pra-universiti yang didaftarkan dalam aliran pengajian tingkatan enam, matrikulasi dan pengajian asas universiti awam di Sabah and Sarawak. Kajian ini mengukur kesediaan pelajar untuk pembelajaran pendidikan tinggi dari perspektif psikososial. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga menyiasat perbezaan kesediaan untuk pendidikan tinggi berdasarkan jantina, etnik, aliran pengajian dan penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris di rumah. Reka bentuk penyelidikan tinjauan keratan rentas perbandingan digunakan dalam kajian ini. Instrumen, PRITES (Skala Kesediaan Psikososial untuk Pendidikan Tinggi) digunakan untuk mengumpul data mengenai kesediaan psikososial pelajar untuk pembelajaran pendidikan tinggi. PRITES mengukur lima dimensi kesediaan psikososial seperti Keberkesanan Diri Akademik, Pembelajaran Regulasi Kendiri, Usaha dan Pemikiran, Motivasi dan Orientasi Matlamat dan Ketekunan dan Penentuan. Sampel kajian ini adalah seramai 481 pelajar di Sabah dan Sarawak. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar dalam kajian ini mempunyai tahap kesediaan psikososial yang sederhana untuk pendidikan tinggi. Secara khusus, mereka adalah di tahap sederhana bersedia dari segi Usaha dan Pemikiran, Motivasi dan Orieantasi Matlamat, dan Ketekunan dan Penentuan. Kelompok pelajar wanita, pelajar dari aliran pengajian asasi universiti awam dan pelajar Melayu merupakan kelompok yang lebih bersedia dari segi kesediaan psikososial untuk pembelajaran pendidikan tinggi. Oleh itu, berdasarkan penemuan kajian ini, pihak berkuasa yang berkaitan dicadang mempertimbangkan reka bentuk strategi intervensi yang sesuai untuk memperbaiki dan meningkatkan pengalaman pembelajaran pendidikan tinggi pelajar disasarkan kepada pelajar lelaki, pelajar tingkatan enam dan pelajar

Melayu. Kajian lanjut yang melibatkan reka bentuk kajian membujur dan eksperimen dan pelbagai pelajar yang mempunyai kelayakan yang setaraf (seperti Politeknik dan aliran diploma Kolej Komuniti) perlu dijalankan untuk mengesahkan keputusan dari kajian ini.

Kata kunci: *Kesediaan pendidikan tinggi, psikososial dimensi, Pra-universiti*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACT	American College Testing
ASE	Academic Self Efficacy
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EM	Effort and Mindset
GPA	Grade Point Average
KPTN	<i>Karnival Pengajian Tinggi Negara</i>
MGO	Motivation and Goal Orientation
MOHE	Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education
MOE	Malaysian Ministry of Education
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
PD	Persistence and Determination
PMR	<i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i>
PRITES	Personal Readiness in Tertiary Education Scale
PREP	Personal Readiness Evaluation for Postsecondary
PT3	<i>Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3</i>
SAT	used to known as Scholastic Assessment Test
SKM	<i>Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia</i>
SPM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i>
SRL	Self-Regulated Learning
STPM	Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia
UPSR	<i>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah</i>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into eleven main sections. Section 1.2 discusses the background of the study. Section 1.3 provides the problem statement of this study. Section 1.4 stated the purpose of this study. Section 1.5 lists the research objectives and research questions of the study. This is followed by Section 1.6 which discusses the research hypotheses of the study. Section 1.7 summarized the research objectives with the relevant research questions and research hypotheses. The next section provides the operational definitions of the relevant terms used in this study. Section 1.8 gives an overall view of the research through the conceptual framework of the study. Section 1.9 discusses the significance and the importance of the study. This is then followed by Section 1.10, which lists the limitations of this study. Lastly, Section 1.11 summarizes the chapter.

1.2 Background of Study

The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has conducted its annual carnival event known as “*Karnival Pengajian Tinggi Negara (KPTN)*” since 2005. The objective of the event is to serve as a “one stop centre” that disseminates the latest information concerning tertiary education such as, study opportunities, scholarships, and student loan to the targeted groups including the applicants, parents, educators and communities (Ministry of Education, 2016). Starting from 2010, a tagline “JOM MASUK U” was used to provide applicants with up to date news and information on university

application. A series of activities are featured in the event such as counselling services, exhibition, forum, guidance and quizzes to raise public awareness of the importance of tertiary education. Through such activities, it is hoped that the applicants will be made aware of and understand the different options available for tertiary education pursuit.

In the Malaysian context, students must complete a minimum of one year in pre-university program (Matriculation/Public University Foundation) or one and a half schooling years in postsecondary program (*Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia*, STPM [Malaysian Higher School Certificate]) after their secondary study to be eligible for public tertiary education study. At the end of their postsecondary school programs, they are required to pass the relevant public examinations. Only students who fulfil the minimum entry criteria are considered for enrolment in public university. Furthermore, students who score better academic achievement in public examination (high-stakes tests) are more likely to succeed in entering public university. Academic achievement which is assumed to reflect one's understanding of academic knowledge has been widely used as an indicator to measure a student's eligibility for further education at Malaysian public university.

However, researches have shown that students' readiness for tertiary education is one of the factors affecting first-year study success or attrition (Jansen & Meer, 2011). Many students who graduated with satisfactory grades in post-secondary school examinations are not ready for tertiary education (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2010; Aud, Hussar, Johnson, Kena, Roth, Manning, Wang, & Zhang, 2012). Some studies such as Baker, Clay and Gratema (2005) has found other non-cognitive factors that contribute to tertiary learning readiness. Conley (2007) further refer to tertiary learning readiness as a multidimensional concept consisting of both internal and external variables

such as an individual psychosocial dimension. Key cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviours, and contextual skills and awareness are four essential components that made up an individual's psychosocial dimensions.

The Malaysian education system adopted centralised public examinations (high-stakes tests) as a dominant form of assessment to assess students' levels of understanding on academic content knowledge (Ong, 2010). Academic results of pre-university studies and public examinations such as STPM, matriculation and public university foundation programs are traditionally considered as criteria for public university entrance (Ministry of Education, 2007; Ministry of Higher Education, 2014) implying that these achievements are used as indicators for success at tertiary education levels. However, researchers in studies conducted in the Western countries have found out example of other factors that also contribute to the success at tertiary study such as self-regulated learning strategies, self-efficacy and motivation (Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley & Carlstrom, 2004; Baker et al., 2005; Robbins, Allen, Casillas, Hamme Peterson, & Le, 2006; Conley, 2007).

Drawing on literature review of tertiary education success, Conley (2010) has identified and categorised a number of external variables such as an institution's culture, norms, and traditions and internal variables such as student's comprehension and communication skills into a key facet four-part model. Figure 1.1 shows four fundamental facets of tertiary learning readiness with key cognitive strategies at the centre, surrounded by key content knowledge, academic behaviours, and contextual skills and awareness at the outer layer.

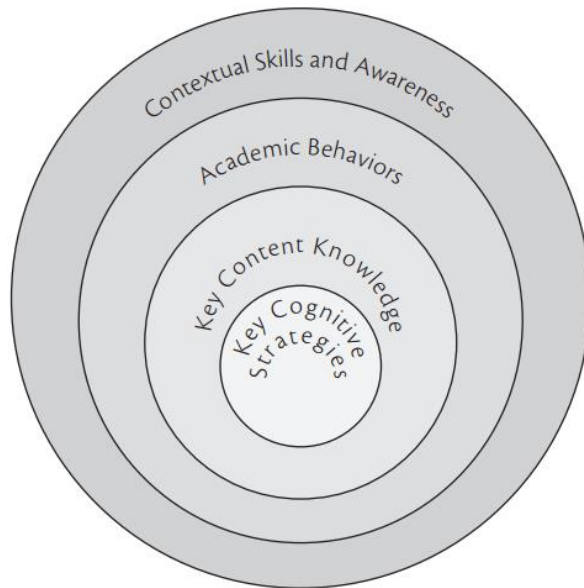


Figure 1.1: Four fundamental facets of tertiary learning readiness model, adapted from Conley (2010, p 32).

Similarly, research has been conducted to study psychosocial predictors and the variance accounted by the predictors in tertiary learning success (Robbins et al., 2004). Robbins et al. found that a higher variance in predicting success in tertiary learning can be achieved when traditional predictor such as results from high-stakes tests is combined with psychosocial predictors. Psychosocial predictors such as academic self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), self-regulated learning strategies (Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie, 2008), effort and mindset (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007), motivational goal orientation (Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002) and persistence and determination (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006) were found to be associated with academic performance in Western studies (Pohl, 2012; Robbins et al., 2004).

Academic self-efficacy refers to one's personal judgments of his or her capabilities to operate and execute courses of action to achieve predetermined educational goals (Bandura, 1977, 1997). The beliefs that learners hold about their capabilities and achievements of their efforts affect the ways they act. Studies indicate that self-efficacy